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Testimony to the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement
HB 5024 An Act Concerning an Education Doctoral Degree Program in Nursing Education
February 9, 2010

Good Morning Senator Handley, Representative Willis, and members of the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement. My name is Elizabeth Ritter, I am the State Representative for the 38th District, and I currently serve as the House Chair of the Committee on Public Health.

I am writing in support of HB 5024 An Act Concerning an Education Doctoral Degree Program in Nursing Education.

I want to first thank the Committee for raising this bill. In today's economy, there is no shortage of discussion on opportunities and ideas around strengthening our educational system to build jobs and provide the appropriate professionals to do the work we believe we will have in the future. This bill offers the chance to do both those things.

The bill will provide an education doctoral degree program in nursing education, giving Connecticut a significant boost in ability to provide more baccalaureate-prepared registered nurses for our future. Degree awardees will satisfy a frustrating problem we have had for years as we have experienced critical shortages of registered nurses: a severe shortage of qualified teachers. By the time the first graduates receive their degrees, Connecticut will once again be experiencing shortages in RN's, and we will be prepared with an expanded ability to teach them. Our ever-changing healthcare needs; increased use of RN's in a variety of healthcare settings, both clinical and non-clinical; and aging population guarantee the need for more highly educated RN's. It is not only appropriate but critical that, at this time, we undertake such a program expansion. Graduates will look forward to vital, well-paid, stable jobs – in an economy that needs them badly.

Again, thank you for raising this bill. I will be happy to discuss it further with you as you proceed with your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Representative Betsy Ritter
38th District